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Religion leads to student involvement on campus

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DE Staff Reporter
Daily Egyptian

In his three years at SIUC, Tolu Akande has been involved in the Southern Illinois Civic Orchestra, Marching Salukis, African Student Council, Saluki Peer Mentor Program and is a student resident assistant for University Hall.

Akande, president of Chi Alpha Campus Ministries, is a prime example of the findings released in this year's National Survey on Student Engagement. The survey found that students who are involved with religion or spirituality-enhancing practices are also more involved in activities at their university.

The study was conducted by the Indiana University Center for Post-Secondary Research and the National Survey on Student Engagement. According to the report, the NSSE annually surveys college students on various dimensions of undergraduate education.

In addition to increased student involvement, the study also found that religious students exercise more, attend cultural events more and are more involved with community service. The survey also found they are more satisfied with the overall college experience.

Akande, a junior from Chicago studying radio and television, said his faith motivates him to serve the campus and those around him. He said he might as well get involved if he is going to be here for four years.

"I want to do the best to please God and make my parents happy," Akande said.

The Rev. Joseph Brown, who has been ordained as a priest since 1972 and directs the SIUC Black American Studies program, said the religious students he knows do seem more involved.

Brown attributes the survey's correlation to the fact that many churches encourage involvement through leadership groups and community service.

"Church activities train you or condition you to just be more active in general," Brown said.

Patrick Langan, staff worker for Intervarsity Christian Fellowship, said the survey's findings do not surprise him. Involvement in the community and at the University is an emphasis of the organization, Langan said.

"I think it's more looking for opportunities to do stuff that makes a difference," Langan said. "I know, for our organization, we put a strong emphasis on getting to know each other."

This is displayed by Newman Catholic Student Center when they state their purpose is to engage in every aspect of university life. Their mission statement encourages members to "integrate personal faith into the academic and social environment of the University."

Akande said he is simply interested in utilizing all the available opportunities at SIUC.

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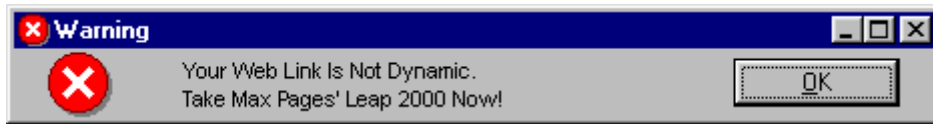
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